

CHICKAMAUGA NATIONAL MILITARY PARK TOUR ROADS  
Chickamauga & Chattanooga National Military Park  
Fort Oglethorpe vicinity  
Catoosa County  
Georgia

HAER No. GA-95

HAER  
GA  
24-FOOG.V,  
1-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
1849 C St. NW  
Washington, DC 20240

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LOCATION: A variety of reservations in Fort Oglethorpe and Rossville, Georgia

DATES OF CONSTRUCTION: May 1890-September 1895

STRUCTURE TYPE: Park Tour Road System

DESIGNER/ENGINEER: Various public and private contractors

ORIGINAL OWNER: U. S. Department of War

CURRENT OWNER: U. S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Park

SIGNIFICANCE: The Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Park tour roads provide access to select areas of the park that commemorate and interpret the conflict between Union and Confederate forces over control of the LaFayette Road leading to Chattanooga. The tour route through the Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Park was originally designed for visitors in carriages, on foot, and on horseback. It has evolved into a route for visitors in automobiles. The roads, culverts, and bridges are integral parts of the park, as they make a variety of areas more accessible to the public. There is also an assortment of foot trails and horse trails that allow visitors to see other areas inaccessible to those in automobiles. The road related structures in the park are significant both for their individual structural designs and for their functional unity as part of the park's overall conception. Initial construction of the park roads began in the 1890s and continued throughout the 1930s. Improvements, additions and closings of some roads took place under the supervision of the War Department, and later the National Park Service.

PROJECT INFORMATION: The Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Park Tour Roads Recording Project is part of the Historic American Engineering Record (HAER), Eric DeLony,

Chief, a long-range program documenting historically significant engineering, industrial, and maritime works in the United States. The HAER program is part of the Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record (HABS/HAER) Division of the National Park Service, Department of the Interior, E. Blaine Cliver, Chief. This recording project was sponsored during the summer of 1998 by the NPS Park Roads & Parkways Program through Federal Lands Highway funds, and Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Park, Patrick Reed, Superintendent, and Jim Ogden, park historian.

The documentation was prepared under the direction of NPS Roads & Bridges Program Manager, Todd Croteau. The recording team consisted of Pete Brooks (Yale University), architect and field supervisor; Nancy Hamburger (Georgia State University), Anna Sniegucka (ICOMOS-Poland), and Tetyana Sprysa (ICOMOS-Ukraine), architects; David W. Haas, large format photographer; and David Ezell (Georgia Tech University), historian. A report detailing the history of the park road system was written by project historian David Ezell and edited by HAER historians Tim Davis and Kelly Young. Due to various shortcomings, the document has been processed as field notes, available upon request at the Library of Congress.

Courtney Youngblood, HAER historian, produced text for the Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Park brochure of the "Highways in Harmony" brochure series, based on David Ezell's text, which is presented below. To aid further research, pertinent bibliographic information has also been provided.

## History of the Region

The land that now encompasses the area of Chattanooga and Chickamauga was first occupied by European settlers in the mid-1700s, as French and English colonists established a somewhat peaceful cohabitation with the Koasati, Tuskegee and Cherokee tribes. Following the War of 1812, these areas of present-day Georgia and Tennessee experienced a marked rise in European settlement. New immigrants moved south along the banks of the Tennessee River, forcing many Indian tribes to vacate the area, while others struggled to maintain rights to their traditional homelands.

The city of Chattanooga was founded during this era of unprecedented growth, and quickly became a center of trade and transportation. By the beginning of the Civil War, Chattanooga had become the principle rail center of the region, making it a valuable asset for the war effort.

Recognizing the importance of Chattanooga, Union forces began to move against the city in early 1863, under the leadership of Major General William S. Rosecrans. In response, Confederate General Braxton Bragg established his troops in a defensive position north of the city.

By the beginning of September 1863, Rosecrans had managed to move his forces past the Confederate defenders to a point on the southern side of the Tennessee River, below Bragg's troops. While the Yankees attempted to reunite their divided forces, the Rebels positioned themselves along the eastern side of the west fork of Chickamauga Creek.

The initial conflict between the two armies occurred near the site of Jay's Mill on 19 September 1863. On the second day of the battle, Rosecrans received erroneous information of a major gap in the Confederate line. Ordering General Thomas Wood's division to drive at that supposed break, Rosecrans created an opening in the Union's own defensive position along LaFayette Road. By the end of the day, this error resulted in a decisive victory for the South.

Unfortunately, Bragg was unable to keep the momentum of that victory and this success was nullified at the Battle for Chattanooga less than two months later.

Union forces were well-entrenched in Chattanooga, and the Confederates established themselves along the high ground around the city in preparation for their strategy of attrition. Rather than face another direct attack, Bragg decided to starve Rosecrans and his men into submission. Within weeks the strategy showed signs of success as rations and supplies were gradually depleted. October brought some relief, however, as reinforcements arrived in the city, leadership in the Union army changed hands, and a supply route was established for the troops in Chattanooga. The balance of power began to shift.

By late November, Union forces had gained enough strength to mount an offensive attack on the Confederate troops outside the city. The ensuing battle lasted three days, from 23 November to 25 November. During the conflict, Union forces gained control of several strategic points in the areas of Lookout Mountain and Missionary Ridge. By the end of the month, the Confederate army was retreating into Georgia.

### **Establishment of the Park**

Like many other Southern battlefields, Chickamauga and Chattanooga were not preserved or protected in the years following the Civil War. The Southern states had neither the desire nor the resources to commemorate sites that usually represented their own defeat. It was, in fact, two Union veterans who noticed the neglected battlefields at Chickamauga and Chattanooga, and began a campaign for preservation and commemoration of the sites. Beginning in June 1888, Henry Boynton and Ferdinand Van Derveer used their career contacts in the media and the military, respectively, to promote support for the creation of a "Western Gettysburg." By May 1890, their goal was met-- House Resolution 6454 was passed to establish the Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Park.

### **Creating a Commemorative Roadway**

The park was initially run by a three-man commission appointed by the Secretary of War. This group's duties were to purchase the park property, open and repair park roads, and define the lines of battle. Written records, logs, diaries, and personal memories of the veterans were used to determine the configuration of the park and its features.

From its inception, the park's efforts were geared towards development of the property as an integrated unit of fields and roads that commemorated the battles of Chickamauga and Chattanooga. Work was devoted to restoring the fields to their 1863 appearance. From 1890 to 1892, the commissioners concentrated on establishing the approach roads and entrances to the park, and then in clearing the fields of underbrush so that battle lines could be more easily established. In addition, the pre-existing roads in the area were reestablished and reopened for transit.

Park and road development continued throughout the latter part of the nineteenth century and into the early twentieth century. The park commission's primary concern was not construction of new roads, but maintenance of existing ones. The initial acts that created Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Park called for government ownership of all "approach roads" into the park, to be ceded by the states of Georgia and Tennessee. Once this occurred, the focus was on developing and improving these roads to accommodate heavy visitor traffic.

There were several points of focus for road development. One of the most important was the LaFayette Road, which had been the center of the controversy during the 1863 battle. Additionally, the Crest Road, which ran through Missionary Ridge, received a great deal of attention. Crest Road was a scenic and historic site, and park developers sought to highlight these features. Also, the approach roads between Lookout Mountain and Rossville, the Dry Valley and Crawfish Springs roads were targeted by developers. Plans for the park also called for the construction of a great military road to run from the Sherman Reservation in northern Chattanooga south through the Chickamauga battlefield and conclude at the site of Lee and Gordon's Mill below the park boundary. Construction of this road began in 1892.

The task of restoring and reopening all the roads that existed at the time of the battles was a primary objective. A work crew of three hundred men lived in the park and toiled daily on the massive restoration project. Completion of the project was expected to require construction of nearly 50 miles of roadway.

Construction projects continued in 1893 with work on the road connecting Lookout Mountain with Rossville, surveys for construction of the Crest Road, completion of the LaFayette Road to Rossville and to a junction with the main route to Chattanooga.

After the park was opened, the need to widen existing roads became a pressing issue. The overwhelming use of the main approach roads necessitated the widening of these routes, which required the acquisition of rights-of-way from owners of properties along these roadways. Many owners agreed to donate these rights without any financial compensation, as it raised their own property values.

Most of the roads leading to and through the park were completed by the turn of the century. In 1902, the LaFayette Road was continued south of the park to the corporate limits of LaFayette, Georgia. Additional improvements to the roads from Rossville to McFarland's Gap and from Crawfish Springs (present-day Chickamauga) to Glass' Mill were also completed. Feeling rather optimistic, Henry Boynton reported to the Secretary of War that this work should be the end of road construction in the park.

Ongoing road work in the park primarily consisted of maintenance projects. In addition to the general tourist burden, was the increasing population of the area and the military use of the roads. These factors ensured that upkeep on the roads would continue to be an ongoing issue.

### **Bridge Improvements**

Several changes and replacements to the park's bridges were made in 1905. The original wooden bridge over Pea Vine Creek was replaced with a concrete structure, the old Alexander's bridge was replaced with a prefabricated truss bridge, and a steel bridge was installed on the

LaFayette Road near the location of Lee and Gordon's Mill. In 1911, the park commission approved another bridge to span Chattanooga Creek.

### **The Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC)**

The organization of Emergency Conservation Work units as part of Roosevelt's New Deal Administration had a tremendous impact on National Park Service sites. CCC camps began to appear in national parks across the country in 1933. The Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Park had four camps at its disposal. Troops at these facilities performed a variety of missions, including construction of roads, fire trails, bridle paths, as well as landscaping, tree surgery, and erosion control.

After the closure of the last CCC camp at Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Park in April 1942, little work was carried on in the areas of maintenance and improvement. Two problems that continued to grow throughout the 1940s and 1950s were the increasing use of the LaFayette Road by local traffic and the growing numbers of park visitors. As the area grew and the economy improved, traffic on the roads began to be perceived by some as a threat to the integrity of the park. In addition to park roads, campgrounds, trails, employee housing, and other facilities were in a state of disrepair and in need of immediate attention.

### **Mission 66**

In response to growing concerns about the deplorable conditions in national parks across the country, the National Park Service developed Mission 66, a ten-year program designed to address the needs of the parks by upgrading facilities, repairing roads, expanding interpretive programs, and improving staffing and management. The primary manifestation of Mission 66 at Chickamauga and Chattanooga was the beginning of efforts to relocate U.S. Highway 27 (the LaFayette Road) outside of the park. Large amounts of commercial traffic through the park had been a long-time concern. However, the relocation project did not become a top priority until park officials were faced with a local movement to widen the highway from two lanes to four to accommodate even higher volumes of traffic.

In 1964 a plan was developed that would reroute U.S. Highway 27 onto a bypass looping around the west side of the park and reconnecting with its original route beyond the borders of the park. In addition, it was proposed that the section of the route that remained in the park would be restored to its 1863 appearance. The National Park Service planned to finance a majority of the project, if approval was granted by Georgia Highway officials. By 1967, it seemed that the U.S. Highway 27 relocation would soon be a reality. Unfortunately, the proposed project foundered and fell by the wayside year after year. Even as late as 1980, the long-running proposal was still being tabled by park administrators due to insufficient funds. Finally in the mid-1990s, the proposed rerouting of the highway was budgeted by the Georgia Highway Department. The

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bypass will add six new miles of highway that will bypass the park and divert daily commuters and commercial traffic around the area. Ground was broken on the project in 1994, with an expected completion date in 1999.



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